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Editorial

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For the most part Republicans at the state and national levels have done a poor job explaining why deep budget cuts are needed.

Instead they have let those who would rather raise taxes hold the microphone.

U.S. Rep. Charlie Bass is one exception.

During a speech to a meeting of Amherst Republicans, Bass likened the government's need to spend to an addiction.

"New Hampshire and all the other 49 states have suffered from this narcotic of uncontrollable spending," said the Second Congressional District Republican.

The analogy is instructive and dead on. Everyone, except perhaps those addicts in denial, understand that addiction destroys lives.

So too is it with an out-of-control economy fed simply by running the U.S. Treasury Department's printing presses a few more days, nights and weekends.

Unfortunately, all too many who read of Bass' words and who may read this editorial are among those in denial. They fail to understand what it means to be born today owing \$50,000 in federal debt from day one. They deny the inflationary spiral headed their way unless federal and state spending assumes a more restrained posture.

As with a drug addict, they live from fix to fix, not looking to the future which many will never see.

This is not to deny the pain and suffering that will be felt as state budgets are reduced and the federal budget reined in. But this is true of withdrawal from any addiction.

For those who don't believe such a spending addiction exists, Foster's Daily Democrat would refer you to an article by Laura T. Coffy for TODAY.com. It was headlined in part, "Compulsive spending or overspending is the drug of choice in this country."

She went on to write:

"Compulsive shopping can range from an occasionally budget-busting diversion to a drop-dead serious addiction. At its most extreme levels, a compulsive-buying problem can lead people to hide or lie about their purchases, max out numerous credit cards, live on the edge financially and stockpile items that never get used and often still have the price tags attached."

While Coffey was clearly writing about personal addiction, it is only a short jump to recognizing a likewise collective addiction. It is this mass addiction (as in mass hysteria) that is consuming the nation.

A bit more of Coffey's writing continues to make the point:

"Compulsive spenders are surrounded by a consumer-driven economy and an American marketing machine that is constantly trying to get them to spend more.

" It can be argued that compulsive spending or overspending is the drug of choice in this country."

Without a doubt, those who deny the government's overindulgence and demand more revenue are themselves consumed by the compulsion of which Coffey writes on behalf of individuals.

Coffey's article goes on to hypothesize over the causes of such addiction. She summarizes Rick Zehr, vice president of addiction and behavioral services at the Illinois Institute for Addiction Recovery at Proctor Hospital. The institute offers a comprehensive in-patient treatment program for compulsive shoppers and spenders.

Accord to Coffey, "Zehr said that as with any kind of addiction — be it alcoholism, gambling or drug dependency — addictive spending is often rooted in punishing feelings of low self-esteem and problems with impulse control. For many compulsive shoppers, their habits start out as something manageable — and immensely enjoyable."

Could it be that guilt drives government spending and the demand that it continue, rather than the altruism touted on the steps of the Statehouse recently in Concord during budget protests?

Most likely that is an overstatement and unfairly taints the motives of many. But it would be interesting to see the charitable contribution levels of those who believe there is a public need to do more, to invest their dollars and those of others in a failing economy.

This "at all costs" approach is another sign of addiction. And as noted above, with addiction often comes denial.

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There is fair argument that those seeking to slash state and federal budgets are themselves married to a cause beyond reason.

But that may be what it takes to end or at least dampen the public appetite for your tax dollars and of those whose jealousy is the real motive for higher and greater taxes on the so-called rich.